

Russians See SALT's Value As Political

By Henry S. Brandon
Special to The Washington Star

MOSCOW — Russian officials say the outcome of the SALT II ratification debate will indicate whether Soviet-American relations can move into a phase that will lead to further arms reductions or an era of fiercer arms competition.

The possibility that a Senate rejection of the treaty later this year might coincide with Chairman Leo-

Kremlin Views

A Star Special Report

As the SALT II debate begins today in the U.S. Senate, the Kremlin, too, is watching. The view from there, as recorded in recent days by Henry Brandon of the London Sunday Times, is one of hope for ratification. But one aside by Kremlin insider Georgi Arbatov suggests a lot about the tone of Russian thinking. He says bluntly: "American senators cannot expect to make the world dance to their tune." This is the report by Brandon, on special assignment for The Washington Star.

nid I. Brezhnev's physical and political demise is on the minds of Russian officials and many statesmen in the world as are the uncertainties that this could inject into the world situation.

Russian officials, Russian military experts and Western diplomats indicated in interviews that the Soviet leadership attaches more of a political than a military importance to the SALT II treaty. But the Soviets do stress that the treaty includes for the first time qualitative restrictions on weapons and that its ratification could lead to further arms limitation agreements.

The reason for the political importance attached to the treaty is that the Carter-Brezhnev meeting in Vienna and the signing of SALT II is

seen as proof that the basic Nixon-Kissinger detente policy, derailed by the first Carter proposals for SALT II of March 1977, is again the guiding impulse to American policy. Its basic function is to contain the risks of conflict within certain boundaries by negotiated agreements or implicit understandings.

In contrast to the Kremlin, the U.S. Senate puts more emphasis on the military aspects of SALT II. The Russians for this reason have been unusually cooperative in giving a Senate delegation and Sens. Sam Nunn and Robert Byrd access to top military and civilian leaders in order to help President Carter to convince the Senate of the importance and the equal advantages of the SALT II treaty.

There is a barely suppressed resentment by the Russians that after all the long drawn-out negotiation with the Carter administration, the Soviet government in effect is now engaged in another set of negotiations with American senators.

Soviet experts in American affairs, however, seem to have had enough influence to overcome the resentment and to win a better understanding in the Politburo for the American constitutional processes.

'A Clearcut Solution'

The Soviets also stress that it is important for the West to understand their foreign policies.

Georgi Arbatov, the director of the Institute for American and Canadian Studies, for instance, put the Soviet position as follows:

"The U.S.S.R. is a great power with its own responsibilities. A situation could develop, say in Southern Africa where we would have no alternative but to aid national liberation movements. We have a clearcut solution, though, to prevent such a situation from developing, which is for the United States to help remove the remnants of colonial rule in Africa.

"It is a great opportunity for the West to strengthen its position in Southern Africa. But American senators cannot expect to make the world dance to their tune. We had some very difficult decisions to take in 1972 when President Nixon decided to bomb Haiphong on the eve of his meeting with Mr. Brezhnev in Moscow.

"Our leadership then had to weigh what was more important in the long run and it decided to hold the summit meeting in spite of this provocation. Whatever might happen on the sidelines of Soviet-American relations, it will be up to the Senate to weigh the importance of SALT II against this and against the fact that it has raised many people's hopes for further positive development."

'To Be Or Not To Be'

Valentin Falin, the spokesman for the Central Committee of the Communist Party and former Soviet ambassador to West Germany, put it somewhat differently:

"The SALT II problem is not an emotional one, it is one of common sense. It's a matter of to be or not to be. It cannot be considered in connection with events in other parts of the world."

He and Vitaly Kobyshev, the head of the Department for American Affairs in the Central Committee who sat in on the interview, nevertheless wondered whether some senators, opposed to SALT, might not take advantage of the revolutionary situation that has developed in Nicaragua and blame the Soviet

Union for it though, he stressed, Russia had nothing to do with it.

One of the highly respected Soviet specialists in military affairs praised the SALT agreement for being the first effort to place quantitative and qualitative limits on the missile race. But he warned that unless it is ratified and serves as a bridge to SALT III, the world "will be moving into an increasingly more dangerous phase."

"The arms race is not any more a race to improve weapons, but one that gains its momentum from new technological inventions. This danger is growing because the military and the scientists now look for weapons which are more useable than big missiles to make limited wars more feasible."

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One Missile Breeds Another

He said that according to the SALT II treaty the United States had the right to opt for the MX missile with a mobile basing system, but it would be a dangerous development because the idea behind it is that United States now needs a counterforce capability.

"As we all know," this man, a former high military official, argued, "the military are like children. When one child has a new toy the other wants it too. Therefore if the United States proceeds with the MX, our military are bound to tell us that they too find a mobile basing system very attractive. Then it will be our turn to improve the accuracy of our missiles and their invulnerability. This is the natural way. If one side escalates the other follows sooner rather than later. The last 15 years prove it."

Three Russian officials, questioned about the prospects of a shift of priorities from military to civilian production, confirmed independently that no shift would even be contemplated until SALT II is ratified.

Obstacles to Ratification

He was emphatic that the Soviet Union is not aiming at military superiority.

He added: "It is impossible for two great powers such as the Soviet Union and the United States to create a situation where one or the other side can achieve superiority. It is not possible even if one tried to gain superiority in one or the other military sector."

It was pointed out that one obstacle to ratification could be the problem of the verification of Soviet missile testing and Soviet unwillingness to give the Turkish government at least tacit approval for overflights by American U-2 planes.

The Soviet officials said it would be psychologically difficult for the Soviet Union to approve the operation of a plane that has such notoriety with the Russian public. They also said that the United States did not really need the U-2 flights for missile test verification but wanted them for other intelligence reasons.

The leading Western ambassadors here, while not necessarily considering Brezhnev a man of peace, believe that he is sincere in his abhorrence of war and that the Soviet government has shown a good deal of restraint in recent months in Africa, the Middle East, Iran and Vietnam.

These Western ambassadors also believe that SALT II is important to the Soviet government because it is symbolic of military equivalence between the Soviet Union and the United States. It flatters the Soviet power ego and it also is a useful reminder to China that the Soviet Union has its own special relationship with the United States.